

FRIENDLY CAVEAT:

BEING

A FEW THOUGHTS
ON

THE FOLLOWING THOUGHTS MAY BE
FOUND IN THE ANCHOR CHAIN, PART
TITUS, CHAP. II. VERSE 15.

Let no Man despise thee.

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By PHILOCLERICUS.

Fida amici reprehensio, PROV. xxvii. 6.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

HOWEVER weak, trifling, or insignificant the following Thoughts may appear, the Author can safely affirm they are well intended; and to all such, whether Clergy or Laity, who take them in that View, they are hereby humbly dedicated,

THE FRIENDLY CAVEAT:

BEING

A FEW THOUGHTS

ON

TITUS, CHAP. ii. VERSE 15.

Let no Man despise thee.

THESE Words make one of the many solemn, salutary, and friendly Advices which *Paul* the Apostle transmitted to his Pupil *Titus*, in an Epistle to which his Name, in the sacred Records, is prefixed: They contain a very short, plain, and at the same time a most necessary Admonition, not to *Titus* only, but to all who are or shall be *Ministers* of the Gospel of *Jesus*, to the End of Time.—The Necessity of frequently inculcating this Advice appeared so strong to the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, that he gives it almost in the very Words of the Text to his other beloved Ward *Timothy*: *Let no man despise thy youth*, says he, 1 *Tim.* iv. 12; and in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, xvi. 11. writing to them of *Timothy's* working the Work of the Lord, he

adds, *Let no man therefore despise him.* And really so anxious was this great Propagator of *Christianity* that there should be no mutual Jealousies between the *Teacher* and the *People*, no Cause of despising one another between the *Pastor* and his *Charge*, that he, on every Occasion, warns, nay, in virtue of the Authority with which his *Master* had invested him, commands them, if they valued the Success of the *Gospel*, and their profiting thereby, by all means to guard against a Thing so destructive to both; for the Words, *Let no man despise thee*, may, without any Impropriety, (as shall hereafter be shewn,) be considered as a double Caveat or Advice both to *Ministers* and *People*.

The Verb, to despise, is of *Latin* Extraction, and signifies to slight, to disdain, to esteem lightly, to scorn, to vilify, to contemn, to abhor, &c. but as the softer Meaning of the Word will best suit the present Purpose, most Use will be made of it.

As was just now said, the Words of the Text, *Let no man despise thee*, may be taken as an Advice both to Ministers and People. As an Advice to a Minister, their plain Meaning is, "Give none just Occasion to
 " look upon you with a slighting or con-
 " temptuous Eye, from any Circumstance
 " of your Behaviour, either as a *Man* or a
 " *Minister*." And as a Direction to the People,

ple, the Words will easily admit of this Sense, " Beware of acting such a Part towards your spiritual Teacher, as may provoke him to betray a Conduct which may lead you to despise him."

Having thus ascertained the Meaning of the Text, in throwing together a few more Thoughts on this Subject, the following Method will be observed:

1st, I will endeavour to point out some Particulars, which, if discovered in the Conduct of a Minister, may have too great an Influence with his Hearers and others, in causing them despise him in the Sense of the Text.

2^{dly}, Hint at some of the Evils arising therefrom,

And, 3^{dly}, Conclude with a short Exhortation,

1st, To Ministers ;

And, 2^{dly}, To the People.

I return then to the first of these, namely, to point out some Particulars, which, if observed in a *Minister's* Conduct, may have too great an Influence in causing his Hearers and others despise him.

And, in the *first place*, one great and principal Thing which will make a Minister to be despised or lightly esteemed, is his rashly and inadvertently entering upon the

Office of the Holy Ministry. A Person designed for this Office and Employment, or to assume that no less useful than honourable Title, an *Ambassador of Jesus Christ*, should previously enquire into his natural as well as his acquired Abilities, and endeavour to satisfy himself and others that they are really adequate to the Undertaking; for if, upon being weighed in the *publick Scale*, they shall be found wanting, he cannot fail of being lightly esteemed; nor should he confine his Enquiry to this Particular alone; to consult his own Conscience anent his secret Views and Motives of becoming a Teacher to others, is also absolutely indispensibly necessary.—If he has a real inward Call from *God* himself, the wise and unerring Disposer of all Things, † his grand and primary Aim will be *his Master's Glory*, and the *Good and Welfare of immortal Souls*; but, if his Inducements come from any other Source, he will not, nay he cannot have any higher Views than making a lucrative *Trade* of his *Profession*, living at Ease on the Produce of the *Fleece*, and paying little or no Regard to the most important Interest of the *Flock*. This must certainly

† None ought to presume to enter into any Ecclesiastical Office, without the Testimony of a good Conscience before God, who only knows the Hearts of Men, 2d Book of Discipline, Chap. iii.

tainly procure him the Contempt of every generous and well disposed Mind.

2dly, Another chief Thing, and which indeed is a Consequence of the former, whereby Ministers make themselves despised or lightly esteemed, is thrusting themselves into Settlements, where the Inclinations of all, or most part of the People are against them. The Absurdity of this Practice is so apparent, that it is astonishing beyond Expression, how there are so many Promoters of it, and even some of them, whose good Wishes for the Interests of Religion, from outward Appearances at least, it would be a gross Breach of Charity to suspect. I would only seriously ask these Persons how they would relish any one forcibly thrusting down their Throat a Morfel of Meat, disagreeable or nauseous to their Taste or Stomach; and that, notwithstanding of their most earnest Entreaties and Remonstrances to the contrary? Surely they would consider it, and very justly too, as carrying arbitrary Power to a most shocking Pitch, and committing an Act of barbarous Violence on the natural System: But how much more so is the other on the spiritual one!

Our blessed *Saviour*, who infallibly knew the Fitness and Propriety of Things, expressly says, *He that entereth not by the door*
into

into the sheep-fold, i. e. with a sincere and honest Intention of advancing the Interests of that Religion I came to establish, (which surely can never be done, if the Hearts of the People are set against the Teacher,) *but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber, (1) i. e.* a violent Intruder with that to which he has no Right or Title.—But, to proceed,

A third Thing, which may make a Minister lightly esteemed, is an unwary and precipitate Choice of a *female Companion*. The frequent Mistakes of Mankind in this Particular have established a homely, though too true a Proverb, “*A hasty Marriage brings sudden Vengeance.*” It is also said of Marriage, that it either makes or mars one. In all other things there seems to be a certain Medium, an indifferent or middle State between good and bad: But it would appear, Experience has proved it beyond Doubt, that, in the matrimonial Union, a Man must be very happy, or very miserable. If this is the Case, how are Ministers to be pitied rather than despised, who stand thus connected with Women described by our Apostle, *Who usurp authority over the man, and are seldom or never in silence, (2) who are*

(1) John x. 1. (2) 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

are slanderers, (1) wandering about from house to house, and tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not. (2) A Mate of this Cast will be an unhappy and grievous Restraint upon *the man of God*, (3) disconcert him in the Exercise of every Part of his Duty ; sour his Temper, and, at last, by forcing him to fall implicitly in with her Measures, will run the Risk of causing both be despised.—Prudence is a most necessary Qualification in a spiritual Pastor, and one of its distinguishing Marks is, *That he rule well his own house*. (4) For this Question very naturally occurs, *If a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?* (5) What particular Circumspection then ought every Man, but more especially every Minister, to use in making a Choice upon which his future Peace and Happiness so much depend ; to take care that he *be not unequally yoked* (6).—Let him weigh the Matter attentively, he will here have Occasion to practise the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, but let it never be without the *Innocence* of the *Dove*, (7) in endeavouring to fix upon one of the amiable Characters our favourite Apostle points out : *One who will adorn herself in modest apparel,*

(1) 1 Tim. iii. 11. (2) *ibid.* v. 13. (3) 1 Tim. vi. 11. and 2 Tim. iii. 17. (4) *ibid.* iii. 4. (5) 1 Tim. iii. 5. (6) 2 Corinth. vi. 14. (7) Matth. x. 16.

*apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety ; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array ; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works : one who will learn in silence with all subjection (1) ; or, as they are farther described in the Chapter, of which the Text is a Part, having a behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, teachers of good things, discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands ; and to this Catalogue of good Qualities the most forcible Reason for having them is subjoined, namely, that the word of God be not blasphemed (2). Even after this truly descriptive Character, it perhaps will not be thought improper, altho' I transcribe a female Portraiture, as drawn at large by another eminent Apostle, *Wives*, says he, *be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.* How valuable to Society is a Woman of this Sort, who, by her meek and engaging Conversation in private, effectuates what her Husband's Labours in publick may fall short in bringing about ! But the inspired Penman in finishing his Picture, proceeds thus ;*

Whose

(1) 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10, 11. (2) Titus ii. 3, 4, 5.

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning, of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, (i. e. the inward Virtues and Graces of the Mind,) in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price; for, after this manner in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own Husbands, even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well (1). But lest it should be thought I have insisted too much on this Particular, I pass on to another; and a

Fourth Thing, whereby a Minister may give Occasion for despising him, and that is, by a sullen, austere, or inaccessible Demeanour. How inconsistent, nay, how ridiculous is it in a Preacher of the Gospel, to be addressing his Hearers, while in the Pulpit, by the endearing Appellations of *my Friends*, and, *my Brethren!* and so soon as he gets out of it, industriously shunning every Occasion of social Intercourse with them, and even discovering a Reluctance to afford them so much as an Opportunity of paying him that Respect, which common Decency

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requires.

(1) 1 Peter iii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,

requires. Surely, instead of Friends and Brethren, one would be apt to think he considered them as his implacable *Enemies*. But, the other Extreme may also bring a Minister into Disrespect, viz. a silly, low, or childish Behaviour. Such as, betraying an unbecoming Anxiety to see or hear of every puerile Diversion; being early in the Crowd, eager to spy every trifling Curiosity, or narrating Stories that are mean and of no Importance; or, what the Apostle, with a peculiar Propriety, terms, *old wives fables* (1), which can neither afford innocent Amusement, or *minister grace to the hearers* (2). A manly and becoming Deportment is a great Ornament to every Person, but more so to a Minister; his Carriage therefore ought neither to be supercilious or forbidding, on the one hand, or mean and trifling, on the other. It was a Rule laid down, and strictly followed by the greatest human Philosopher that ever the World was blest with; *To the weak to become as weak, that he might gain the weak; and to be made all things to all men, that he might by all means save* (i. e. that is, be the Instrument of saving) *some* (3); and really this Rule is worthy the Imitation of the most accomplished

(1) 1 Tim. iv. 7. (2) Eph. iv. 29. (3) 1 Cor. ix. 22.

plished Clergyman of these modern Times. But farther, a *fifth* Thing, which may bring a Minister to be despised, or little esteemed, is, his betraying a groundless and uncharitable Diffidence or Distrust of his People, by imagining they have entered into Combinations to wrong and defraud him, altho' probably, would he allow himself coolly and impartially to think, he might be convinced, that, by a Peculiarity in their Situation, they are burdened above Measure, in providing him a competent Living, by which, and by their Care to do him all Manner of Justice, his Maintenance may be better than what any of his Predecessors enjoyed: Notwithstanding of which, would it not be very unaccountable in him, to be still crying out, WANT! WANT! as if *a man's life and Happiness, consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesseth* (1), although we are informed by infallible Authority, that *they who will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* (2). But the Disesteem we have been speaking of, will

B 2.

receive

(1) Luke xii. 15. (2) 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

receive additional Strength, if a Minister carry the Matter so far, as go to Law with his Parishioners, especially from trivial Causes ; and the more so, if, at any Time, he shall refuse to submit the Differences between them, though offered by the other Party, to the amicable Decision of neutral Persons, *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, and these of the uncircumcised triumph* (1), that any one who bears the Character of a Minister of the Gospel (the native Tendency of which is to reconcile the ferocious *Wolf* and gentle *Lamb* (2) should ever reject an Opportunity of having any Differences, that may happen between him and his People, removed in a private and friendly Manner, *Now therefore* (says the Apostle of the Gentiles), *there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another : Why do ye not rather take wrong ? Why do ye not suffer yourselves to be defrauded* (3) ? But, instead of exercising this Act of Condescension and Self-denial, what a Reproach is it to the Ministerial Character, that there should be the smallest Shadow of Reason for the following Accusation by a People, who scarcely deserve the Name of Christians:

(1) 2 Sam. i. 20. (2) Isa. lxxv. 25. (3) 1 Cor. vi. 6, 7.

Christians : " From this Abuse" (speaking of
 exuberant Stipends) " hath proceeded (says
 " Barclay in his Apology for Quakerism, Pages
 " 338 and 339) that *Luxury* and *Idleness*, that
 " most of the *Clergy* live in, even among *Prote-*
 " *stants* as well as *Papists*, to the great Scan-
 " dal of Christianity: For, not having law-
 " ful Trades, to work with their Hands,
 " and being so superfluously and sumptu-
 " ously provided for, they live in *Idleness* and
 " *Luxury*: And there doth more Pride, Va-
 " nity and worldly Glory, appear in their
 " *Wives* and *Children*, than in most others;
 " which is open and evident to all. They
 " become hereby so *glued* to the *Love of Mo-*
 " *ney*, that there is none like them in *Malice*,
 " *Rage* and *Cruelty*. If they be denied their
 " Hire, they rage like drunken Men, fret,
 " fume, and, as it were, go mad. A Man
 " may sooner satisfy the severest Creditor,
 " than them; and the general Voice of the
 " Poor doth confirm this: For indeed they
 " are far more exact in taking the *Tithes* of
 " *Sheep*, *Geese*, *Swine*, and *Eggs*, &c. and
 " look more narrowly to it, than to the
 " Members of their Flock; they will not
 " miss the least Mite, and the poorest Wi-
 " dow cannot escape their avaricious Hands.
 " Twenty Lies they will hear unreprieved,
 " and as many Oaths a Man may swear in
 " their

“ their Hearing, without offending them,
 “ and greater Evils than all these they can
 “ overlook; but, if thou owest them ought,
 “ and refuseth to pay it, then nothing but
 “ War will they thunder against thee, and
 “ they will stigmatize thee with the horrible
 “ Title of Sacrilege, and send thee to Hell
 “ without Mercy.” — But leaving this long
 Quotation, I proceed to the next Particular,
 which is

A *sixth* Thing, which may lessen the Respect due to Ministers; and that is, their using the Censures of the Church rashly against Delinquents; I mean, without previously endeavouring to bring them to Submission, by private Admonition, or friendly Expostulation: *Rebuke, reprove, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine* (1), is the Advice of our Apostle: And the Great Author of our Religion has prescribed a most excellent Rule; one entirely corresponding to that meek and condescending Temper, which shone with most dazzling Lustre in every Circumstance of his Life, *Moreover* (says he) *if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in*

(1) 2 Tim. iv. 2.

the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican

(1). Here are no less than three several Steps to be taken in endeavouring to reclaim an Offender; *First*, by a private and friendly Conference: If that does not answer, then, by a more open and formal Expostulation, in the Hearing of one or two Witnesses, that they may give both their Assistance and Evidence, if necessary. But if that should also prove ineffectual, Recourse must be had to the Authority and Discipline of the Church, to which if the Offender does not submit, then, and not till then, is he to be deprived of his Benefit and Privileges, or accounted unworthy to share of the Childrens Bread. How unwarrantable then would it be for any Office-bearer in the Church, with a view to express some private Grudge, occasioned by *female Clatter*, to leap over the ordinary Forms of judicial Procedure, as well as the common Rules of Decency and Discretion, in order to procure Authority for letting fly *the Ecclesiastick Thunder-bolts of Excommunication*, &c. against any Person whatever!—

This

(1) Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

This Method, instead of bringing the Offender to a just Sense of his Sin, will rather disgust and harden him. For common Experience hath taught, that more Good can be done by soft and gentle Means, than all the Force of Man will be able to effectuate.

But, *lastly*, on this Head, What most of all will bring Ministers into Disesteem with their People is, if they give them just Ground to think, that they themselves seem to have a very low and contemptible Opinion of their Office and Business. A great many of our modern Divines (there's too great Reason to suspect) look upon it as an intolerable Task, to step aside from the World into their Closet (*a*), once or twice a Week, and there exert themselves in the Art of Composition, and at the same Time call upon the Assistance of the unerring Spirit,
for

(*a*) Let me particularly remind you, that nothing will more assist or animate you in the Exercises of the Pulpit, than the Devotions of the Closet; provided these are humble and liberal, simple and exalted, serious and fervent. In that Case they will be,——What will they be? A rich, perennial Spring of Inspiration. They will diffuse through your publick Addresses, both to God and to Man, a certain ethereal Influence, that will be universally seen and felt. Oh! how different from the Constraint, the Formality, the Frigidity, the Deadness you have some times witnessed. Mr. Fordyce's Sermon preached before the General Assembly; May 1760. p. 65.

for enabling them to throw together a few Thoughts on any pertinent Subject, for the Entertainment, Instruction, and Edification of their Hearers, at the Times stated for publick Worship. No, they must have Recourse to the Labours and Productions of their Predecessors, who (happy for the present Generation) made greater Conscience of their Business than they. Certain Portions of these Productions are got by mere Rote (*b*), and repeated in the Pulpit, by way of Lecture or Sermon, in the same Manner a School-boy does his Lesson, but with this dishonourable Difference, that these borrowed Words and Sentiments are made to pass for the Produce of the Preacher's own Study and Imagination. And if any one should be so daringly presumptuous, as hint the contrary to them, in the most private and friendly Manner, such Intimations would be resented from the Pulpit, with the highest Virulence and Acrimony

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mony

- (*b*) He who by Preaching hopes to raise a Name,
To no small Excellence directs his Aim.
On every noted Preacher he must wait;
The Voice, the Look, the Action imitate:
And when complete in Stile and Eloquence,
Must then crown all with Learning and good Sense.
But some with lazy Pride disgrace the Gown,
And never preach one Sermon of their own;
'Tis easier to transcribe than to compose,
So all the Week they eat, and drink, and doze.

mony (c). This, I can't help observing, by the bye, would not only be making a very ungrateful Return for a Favour so well-intended, but would also be intermixing Mens private Quarrels with the Ordinances of GOD's Worship, which, one would be apt to think, comes too near the Sin of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, in putting strange Fire in their Incense before the LORD; their awful Punishment for which, we have recorded, *Levit. x. 1, 2.*—But, to go on; in spite of all that may be said, in favour of the Practice of adopting other Mens Words, Phrases, and Sentiments, and using them as our own, it is the most indolent Slavery imaginable. What languid Constraint and Formality, Coldness and Indifferency (d), must run through

(c) If Bards to *Pope* indifferent Verses show,
 He is too honest not to tell them so.
 This is obscure, he cries, and this too rough,
 These trifling, or superfluous; strike them off.
 How useful every Word from such a Friend!
 But *Parsons* are too proud their works to mend,
 And every Fault with Arrogance defend:
 Think them too sacred to be criticiz'd,
 And rather chuse to let them be despis'd.

Art of Preaching, p. 20, 21.

(d) 'Tis not enough that what you say is true,
 To make *us* feel it, *you* must feel it too.
 Show yourself warm'd, and that will Warmth impart
 To every Hearer's sympathizing Heart.

When

through the whole Delivery of the Product of this *Literary Stealth* (e)? For it is simply impossible a Man can deliver the Sentiments of another with the same Feeling, Energy, and Liveliness, as his own Productions. It is therefore, not only *building on another man's foundation* (1) (f), that is, adopting his Plan, and observing his Method (which, when used with Propriety and Moderation; is, in this Age, where Inspiration is in a great measure ceased, allowable); but it is shamefully *boasting of other mens labours*, and what the Apostle calls, *making use of another mans line, of things made ready to their*

C 2

When honest *Foster* Virtue does enforce,
All give Attention to the warm Discourse:
But who a cold, dull, lifeless Drawling keeps,
One half his Audience laughs, the other sleeps.

Last mentioned Pamphlet, p. 9.

(e) The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Therefore behold, I am against the prophets; saith the LORD, that *steal* my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith, *Jer.* xxiii. 28, 29, 30, 31.

(1) *Rom.* xv. 20.

(f) According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon; *1 Cor.* iii. 10.

their hand (1). What then are the Consequences of this Practice? Does it not give the most just Ground to call in question the Abilities of those who are its Votaries? For, surely, a Person of very common Abilities, could, by a little Diligence and Application, get a Sermon or Discourse by Heart, and then repeat it. Does not this Practice also evidently preclude these supernatural Assistances, which infinite Goodness and unerring Wisdom have promised to all who ask them in Sincerity and Truth? And is it not in effect placing all that Dependence in a tenacious Memory, which ought to be put in GOD alone? without whose Blessing the most polished Performances will be but as *a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal* (2); neither reclaim the Sinner, or confirm the Saint. As was hinted before, it is allowed, that the most extraordinary Parts of Inspiration, such as Prophecies, Diversity of Tongues, &c. are now almost, if not altogether ceased; but surely, from this, it will never be inferred, that the All-sufficient and Unchangeable Spirit, who is the same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever, has given over his Operations on the Hearts of Men, in enabling them *to bring forth things new and old* (3), for leading and instructing Mankind

(1) 2 Cor. x. 16. (2) 1 Cor. xiii. 1. (3) Matth. xiii. 52.

Mankind in the Ways of Truth and Righteousness. For the Lips which were never opened in vain said, *Lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the world* (1); and, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,—which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance* (2).

But these above mentioned are not the only Evils arising from this Practice. One Act of spiritual Indolence (if I may be allowed the Expression) begets another. Preachers may not only enslave themselves to other Mens Words and Works, but they may also render these, and even the real Fruit of their own Labours, and what is still more dangerous, the most sublime, affecting, and important Parts of Religion, flat, pithless, and insipid, by constantly dwelling upon a few select Sermons, a very contracted System of Divinity indeed! which probably performs its Revolutions at least four Times in the Year. It is true, there is a proverbial Saying to this Purpose: *A good Tale is no worse of being twice told.* Twice, nay thrice telling would be tolerable; but the human Mind is like the Stomach, as a constant
Repetition

(1) Matth. xxviii. 20. (2) John xiv. 16, 26.)

Repetition of the same Meats, dressed and served up always in the same Manner (or which have undergone no essential Alteration) be they ever so choice or delicate, will at length disgust the one; so the frequent Exhibition of one continued Set of intellectual Food must become offensive and irksome to the other; and it is humbly apprehended there are no Exceptions from this Rule, but the holy Scriptures themselves, which are indeed, to those who have a just Relish for them, an *Evergreen*, a never-fading Source of *reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness* (1). But Ministers may carry Indolence to a still more surprising Height, by having Recourse to a very curious Kind of Deception, when by the too frequent Usage of their narrow and borrowed System of Knowledge, the Extent of their Preaching-fund runs the Risk of being totally discovered. Surely the Reader can't be at a loss to find out the Device I am pointing at; but lest he should, he'll please know that it may be practised for some short Time with tolerable Success, by only changing a Text, altering the Introduction, and transposing the Paragraphs of an old and long-hackneyed Discourse, so as to make it assume quite a new Appearance. But alas! alas! this Artifice

(1) 2 Tim. iii. 16.

tifice will not hold out long ; it must soon be perceived, by every Person of the smallest Discernment, except those who resign that Faculty into the Arms of Sleep, that, instead of any fresh or elegant Entertainment, the outward Garnishments of the Dish are only a little varied ; or, to quit the Allegory, the principal Parts of a Sermon as repeated, which by long and hard Service, had ere that Time, in the Opinion of the Publick, been wore thread-bare ; so that a mangled Performance of this Kind, in place of answering the salutary Purposes for which publick Discourses were at first intended, must have as little Virtue to edify or improve the Mind, as twice sodden Coleworts have to strengthen or recruit the Body. Ministers therefore should disdain such low and mean Artifices, and follow the Direction our Apostle prescribes in another Case, *Forget the things that are behind*, not satisfy themselves with the Aids and Attainments they are already possessed of, but *press forward to things that are before* (1) ; aspire every Day to higher and higher Advances in Knowledge and Grace, that they may be able to communicate the one, and commend the other to all around them. To this Purpose the same Apostle, in his Charge to

(1) Philip. iii. 13, 14.

to Timothy, says, *Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Meditate upon these things, (i. e. upon the various Parts of thy Duty and Business) and give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting, (i. e. thy Improvement) may appear to all* (2). Thus Ministers, instead of considering their Work and Business as a Piece of Drudgery, will esteem it their greatest Glory and highest Honour to “spend, “and be spent” in their Master’s Service.

Thus I have endeavoured to point out some Particulars, which, if observed in the Conduct of a Minister, may have too great an Influence with his Hearers and others, in causing them despise him, or, according to the softer Meaning of the Text, make him lightly esteemed.

I now come to the second Thing proposed in the Method, which is, to hint at some of the Evils arising from such a Conduct in Ministers.

Indeed, considering what has been already said on the first Head, joined to the common Observation and Experience of Mankind, with regard to these Evils, it will be needless to insist much on them here; they are already but too obvious. However, in the *first place*, this much may be said in general, if it is true that the Christian Religion

(2) 1 Tim. iv. 14, 15.

gion has been more injured by the evil Conversation of many of its Professors than from all the Malice of its avowed Enemies ; it may be justly added, that the Injury has been greatly heightened by the inconsistent Conduct of its Teachers: For, more particularly, in the *second place*, the unwary, disobliging and offensive Behaviour of Ministers must have a Tendency the most destructive to the Interests of that Religion they preach, because thereby the Truth and Reality of its Doctrine and Precepts are liable to be called in question: In a word, the wavering and unsettled are in hazard of being drove back to the Paths of Sin and Folly, the wicked and unbelieving confirmed in their Unrighteousness, or, to speak in the Words of Inspiration, *the enemies of the cross of Christ will take occasion to blaspheme* (1); and, to crown all, serious and well disposed Minds will be grieved and offended. How truly lamentable is it that the strange Inconsistencies observable in the Carriage of some Ministers should justify the World in putting the following Saying in their Mouths ! “ Don’t do as we do, but as we bid you ;” that is, “ However little Correspondence there may be between our “ *Words as Ministers, and our Actions as Men,*
D “ let

(1) 2. Sam. xii. 14. and Philip. iii. 18.

“ let the first be strictly observed, but the
 “ last entirely overlook’d.” This is exactly
 what our Saviour so justly condemned the
 Office-bearers in the *Jewish Church* for,
The scribes and Pharisees, (says he,) sit in Mo-
ses seat, all therefore whatsoever they bid you
observe, that observe and do, but do not ye
after their works: for they say and do not.
For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to
be born, and lay them on mens shoulders (grievous indeed if to be judged of from their Example) *for they themselves will not move the m^o with one of their fingers* (1). But hold! is it possible that there are any Christian Teachers, who act in such a preposterous, nay, in such a perfidious Manner? Alas! with what Certainty can common Experience answer in the Affirmative? If Ministers therefore would act worthy of the Character they bear, if they have the smallest Regard for their own Honour and Reputation, and the spiritual Benefit and Advantage of the People over whom they are set, their Profession and Practice should correspond, and their Words and Actions harmonize (g): For it is a well known Maxim, that

(1) Matth. xxiii. 2, 3, 4.

(g) Your sacred Function often call to Mind,
 And think how great the Trust, to teach Man-
 kind!

’Tis

that "Example goes before Precept." The one is to the other what the Soul is to the Body; it gives it Life and Vigour, and pleasantly spurs it on to Action. Ministers are stiled, in the Commission they received from their Master, *The salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith can it be salted (1)? Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work; but the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace to them that love peace (2).*

D 2

Having

'Tis yours in useful Sermons to explain,
Both what we owe to God, and what to Man.
Yours every social Virtue to improve,
Justice, Forbearance, Charity and Love;
Yours too the private Virtues to augment,
Of Prudence, Temperance, Modesty, Content:
When such the Man, how amiable the Priest!
Of all Mankind the worthiest and the best.

Art of preaching, p. 15.

(1) Matth. v. 13. (2) James iii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18.

Having thus endeavoured to discuss the second Head, *viz.* to hint at some of the Evils arising from the unwary Conduct of Ministers, I hasten to the third and last Thing proposed, namely, to conclude with a short Exhortation,

1st, To Ministers, and,

2^{dly}, To the People.

And as there has been already a good deal said by way of Advice, as I went along the Particulars of the first Head, this Part of the Subject shall be very short.

As to the first Branch then, and particularly, with respect to these Ministers who have given their Hearers Cause of Offence, from any of the Particulars before mentioned, need I use many Words in earnestly exhorting you, without Delay, to remove the Cause, as far as in your Power, that the Effect may cease, and to endeavour a Reconciliation? surely no. If you, Gentlemen, will but allow yourselves coolly and seriously to reflect how much is at stake, your own inward Peace and Tranquillity (for I can't allow myself to suppose the Case is so desperate as that you are past feeling); the Interest and Advancement of Religion, the Advantage of immortal Souls, and, what ought to have the most powerful Influence on you, the final Approbation of your

your great Lord and Master, *Well done, good and faithful servants* (1), you will not surely hesitate a Moment in trying, on your Part, to restore the *Spirit of unity with the bond of peace* (2); for let me here seriously ask you, What are all your publick Labours and Discourses to be compared to, although delivered with all the Graces of Oratory, the Beauties of Eloquence, and the Power of Rhetorick, nay, even with the Tongue of an Angel (3), if you yourselves are not living and speaking Examples of the Precepts you teach and the Doctrines you inculcate? Shall I answer my own Question? or are you before-hand with me? in acknowledging that they are like an Arrow piercing the yielding Air, but which leaves no Traces behind it. It is your Business then, first to wade through the Difficulties that attend Religion, by *taking heed unto yourselves and to your Doctrine* (4), putting away all bitterness, anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice (5); not discovering any inordinate Desire for worldly Advantage, and much less of sacrificing Peace and Harmony for every trifling Consideration, but *feeding the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint,*

(1) Matth. xxv. 21. (2) Eph. iv. 3. (3) 1 Cor. xiii. 1. (4) 1 Tim. iv. 16. (5) Eph. iv. 31. (1)

constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind (1). At the same time, speaking and ministering according to the gift and ability which God hath severally given you; that God in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ (2); and then if your People will not follow you, you have this great Ground of Comfort that you have done your Duty.

Now shall I, in the *second place*, offer my poor Advice to these Ministers who have never given their People any Ground to esteem them lightly? All I shall say to them is, By every lawful and possible Method strive to strengthen, settle, and confirm the mutual Love and Respect between you and your People. Nothing can have a more beneficial Tendency: We naturally copy after the Pattern we love; and if your People, or any of them, through the Infirmary of the Flesh, and the Failings we are all in some Measure liable to, should at any Time behave so as to weaken or disturb this Love and Harmony, you, for your Consolation, can take up the solemn Appeal of our favourite Apostle, *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare*

(1) 1 Pet. v. 2. (2) ib. iv. 11.

declare unto you all the counsel of God, Acts
xx. 26, 27.

And now, let me conclude with a short Exhortation to the People, and first, to these whose spiritual Pastors have given them any Cause to despise them. As there is so much depends upon your loving and esteeming your Ministers, I beseech you, on every proper Occasion, to show the strongest Desire, that all mutual Enmity and Jealousies should be done away. Upon a strict and impartial Examination, you'll probably find, that some Parts of your own Behaviour towards your Ministers have contributed not a little to establish these Heart-burnings; if so, you are bound in Justice to be first in acknowledging your Fault: But whatever may be in that, whether the Ground of Offence has come from the one Side or the other, it is your indispenfible Duty, and may, in the Event, prove your inexpressible Advantage, to solicit a Reconciliation. Do not stand upon Punctilios, which commonly flow from Pride. If your Ministers will not meet you half-way in the Road to Reconcilement, advance forward, and show them, although you do not bear their *sacred Name*, you have the *Christian Practice*. If all shall prove ineffectual, instead of representing the Disappointment with Wrath
and

and Bitterness, bear it with a becoming Meekness and Patience; thereby convincing the World, that if your Ministers have mistaken their Trade, you know your Duty; and trust in God, that, when he sees it meet, he will work out your Deliverance.

But, 2dly and lastly, With respect to the People who are blest with Ministers of an opposite Character, my Advice to them may be very short: It is your Duty and Interest to put a just Value upon your Blessing, and you cannot do it more effectually than by *esteeming your ministers very highly for their works sake* (1). Remember at the same time that they are Men of like Passions with yourselves; you must not expect an absolutely perfect Pattern of Holiness and Goodness; you are therefore to make merciful Allowances for any Failings or Imperfections you may now and then observe in them, *Charity covereth a multitude of sins* (2), especially Sins of Weakness and Infirmary. If you sincerely love your Ministers as you ought, you will pray for spiritual Strength to support them, instead of viewing their Slips with a censorious Eye.

To

(1) 1 Thess. v. 13. (2) 1 Pet. iv. 8.

To conclude, may that omnipotent and unerring Spirit, who alone can bring Light out of Darkness, Order out of Confusion, and Good out of Evil, remove every Cause of Prejudice between Ministers and People, and enable both *to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called ; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another in love* (1). Amen.

(1) Eph. iv. 1, 2.

D I N I S.

33
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(2) ...

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